

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

SETA Head Start

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Using small fingers can lead to big learning for your child

Can your child's fingers help him learn? Sure! By doing *fingerplays*—simple songs where finger motions go with the lyrics—he can have fun with rhymes and begin to master counting.

For instance, he could sing: **“Five little ducks went out one day [hold up five fingers], Over the hills and far away, Mommy duck called ‘quack, quack, quack,’ But only four little ducks came back [hold up four fingers].”**

As the song continues and he reaches zero, voilà! He just learned to count backward from five, and enjoyed rhymes while doing it.

For the rest of the lyrics to “Five Little Ducks” and other fingerplays, visit www.preschoolrainbow.org/preschool-rhymes.htm.

Source: “Fingerplays, Action Poems, Nursery Rhymes, and Songs,” Gayle’s Preschool Rainbow, www.preschoolrainbow.org/preschool-rhymes.htm.



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“Choose an author as you choose a friend.”

—Sir Christopher Wren

Put your child in charge of story time

Build your preschooler's sense of responsibility by putting her in charge of story time. To help her feel more responsible, let her:

- **Choose what to read.** Make a trip to the library together. Ask the librarian to show her several books she might enjoy. Then let her choose three to take home.
- **Pick the time.** You may have a “set in stone” story time, but allow your child to tweak it a bit.
- **Select a snack.** What would make sharing stories even better? How about cookies and milk? Or a few cubes of cheese and some juice? Let your child decide.

Inspire a love of reading



Turn your budding bookworm into a lifelong reader! Get her to adore books now and forever by:

- **Having daily story time.** Sharing books shouldn't be a rare treat. Read stories together every single day.
- **Being enthusiastic.** Use funny voices when you read. Be dramatic. Get silly! Show your child that books are worth getting excited about.

Source: Olugbemisola Amusa-Shonubi, “12 Ways to Make Reading Fun,” Parents.com, www.parents.com/12-ways-to-make-reading-fun.

Answer reading questions



If you have questions about reading, the National Institute for Literacy has answers.

Log onto www.nifl.gov/partnership_forreading/questions/questions_about.html to find out more. It's informative—and free!

What are ‘Dolch’ words?



Has your preschooler's teacher ever mentioned “Dolch” words? And did it leave you scratching your head? It sounds more confusing than it is.

Dolch words are simply “sight words”—common words your child can memorize to help him read more fluently. They're named for Edward Dolch, who compiled them in 1948.

To see the complete list of Dolch words, visit www.theschoolbell.com/Links/Dolch/Dolch.html.

Reward reading with a 'Reading Tree'

Each time you and your child finish a new book, celebrate! This idea will help:

- **Cut the shape of a tree** out of brown construction paper. Hang it in a visible spot.
- **Add a "leaf" to the tree** for every new book you read. (Write the name of the book on the leaf.)
- **Change the leaf shape** or color each month. February "leaves" might be heart shaped. April "leaves" might be flowers. Let your child make final decisions about how leaves should look and where to hang them.

At the end of the month, save your leaves in a folder. Count them and reminisce about the wonderful stories you read.

Source: "Language Ideas," The Perpetual Preschool, www.perpetualpreschool.com/languageideas.html.



Books to delight your early reader

Brava, Strega Nona! by Tomie dePaola (Penguin Group). The latest book about beloved character Strega Nona shares important values in a fun pop-up format. With tabs to pull and doors to open, your child is sure to be entertained.

Thump, Quack, Moo: A Whacky Adventure by Doreen Cronin and Betsy Lewin (Simon & Schuster). The farm animals are excited for the annual Corn Maze Festival. But Duck has a plan that Farmer Brown doesn't see coming. Get lost in this a-maze-ing book with your little one today!

Take the reluctance out of your reader

Is your bookworm balking about reading these days? You can help her overcome her reading reluctance if you:

- **Think outside the book.** There's no rule that says reading has to involve books. If your child doesn't feel like flipping pages, try an audio book instead.
- **Pause occasionally while reading.** Encourage your child to fill in the word. Preschoolers quickly learn to repeat words and phrases in their favorite books. This makes reading more fun and interactive.
- **Have a book-and-movie party.** Together, select a book that's been made into a



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movie. After you read the story, snuggle up and watch the big-screen version.

Source: Maile Carpenter, "How to make reading fun," ParentCenter.com, http://parentcenter.babycenter.com/0_how-to-make-reading-fun_66792.pc.

Try simple ways to boost your child's brainpower



The better thinker your child is, the better reader he may become. So try these activities to boost his learning (or *cognitive*) skills:

- **Give him puzzles to solve.** Break out the jigsaw puzzles and get busy! Once he masters the easy ones, challenge him with one that's more complicated.
- **Tell him riddles.** What has two hands but no feet? A clock! And what's black and white and *read* all over? A newspaper! See if your little thinker can figure out these and other brain teasers.
- **Play with patterns.** Use coins or other small objects to make a pattern (like nickel, quarter, dime, nickel, quarter, dime). See if your child can continue it correctly.



Q. What's the magic formula for picking books my preschooler will like?

A: There's no magic, but there are some things to keep in mind. First, is the story interesting? Is it age-appropriate? Are the pictures splashy and engaging? If the answer is "yes" to all these things, you likely have a winner. But if you're still not sure? Ask a librarian for suggestions.

Do you have a question about reading? Email readingadvisor@parent-institute.com.

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Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
Managing Editor: Pat Hodgdon.
Editor: Jennifer McGovern. Writer: Holly Smith.
Copyright © 2009, The Parent Institute® (a division of NIS, Inc.)
P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474
1-800-756-5525, ISSN: 1533-3299
www.parent-institute.com